

THE
NATURE, DESIGN,
RULES AND REGULATIONS
OF A
Charitable Institution
TERMED THE
STRANGER'S FRIEND:

Begun in DUBLIN, in 1791,
AND AFTERWARDS ESTABLISHED IN
MANCHESTER, LIVERPOOL, and other Places,
HUMBLY RECOMMENDED

TO THE
Consideration of all THOSE who EARNESTLY WISH
to ameliorate

The CONDITION of the POOR;

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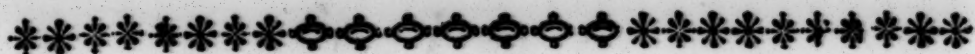
P R E F A C E.

FROM the nature of my employment, I have been called to visit numbers of the most wretched of my fellow creatures in different parts for above eighteen years. I think I may say, I have seen human nature in almost all the possible varieties of *Wickedness, Poverty and Woe*. I have had *Spectacles of Misery* exhibited to me, and *Tales of Woe* told, that must have wrung the most unfeeling heart. I wished to relieve all the distressed I met with, but alas! the hand *could not* give, what the heart wished to bestow. I sought assistance from others, I begged from those in affluence to distribute to the Necessitous, and I often succeeded. But wherever I came, such was the extent of the Misery, I was obliged to seek for help, and associate others in the work. This gave rise to the Society described in the following pages, established first in Dublin, and supported by a few poor pious young men, who were the first Visitors, who contributed three-pence a week each for its support. It was easy to discover that as most of the miseries we saw, sprang from *Ignorance, Folly and Sin*, so there was no way of affording Relief, but in *leading the Blind by THAT WAY which they knew not*. The simple Truths of the Religion of Christ we found best calculated, to enlighten the mind, and attract the heart. God gave his blessing to a Work begun in his Name, and carried on with the only view of promoting his glory in his creatures good. Thousands of families have had the most effectual Relief, and many, very many have been turned from darkness to light, not a few are gone to God, and several are walking in the light of his countenance, and shewing in a holy life and conversation, the efficacy of a Charity founded on and conducted by Christian Principles, and accompanied by the peculiar blessing of God.

God loves the Poor, and he that hath pity on the Poor, lendeth unto the Lord, and let him look, what he layeth out, it shall be paid him again.

A. C —.

LONDON, May 18, 1798.



The NATURE, DESIGN, and
GENERAL RULES
OF THE
STRANGER'S FRIEND SOCIETY, &c.

"But the STRANGER that dwelleth with you, shall be as one born among you : Thou shalt love him as thyself." Lev. xix. 34.

"As ye are, so shall the STRANGER be before the Lord." Numb. xv. 15.

"I was a STRANGER and ye took me in—Sick and ye visited me."—
Matt. xxv. 35.

The generous Mind is not confin'd at *Home*,
But spreads itself *abroad* through all the Public,
And feels for every Member of the Land. YOUNG.

IT is a melancholy truth, that however deplorable the state of street Beggars may appear, they are not in general the most necessitous.—Cellars, garrets, and such like places, exhibit spectacles much more affecting. In these abodes of human misery, the wretched inhabitants are frequently found, either exerting the last efforts of nature, to support themselves amidst the frowns of adversity, or languishing under the most powerful influence of complicated disease.

Multitudes of these have been discovered, who were utterly destitute of friends, deprived of every means of procuring the necessaries of life, and often without the comforts of that Religion, which, penetrating the gloom of human misery, opens a bright prospect into another world—To complete their distress, frequently STRANGERS in the place, and because of sore affliction, incapable of applying for relief, where the *Law* says, *it may be found*.—How truly deplorable must their situation be!

These being incontestable facts, a few of the Friends of suffering Humanity, have united themselves in a Society, each contributing
weekly

weekly according to his ability, in order to relieve STRANGER's and all such as have no Helper :—determining not to permit themselves to be influenced by the former causes of present distresses, nor the nation, sect, or party to which such afflicted persons belong.

From the above it will be easily observed, that, as this Society is formed on the most benevolent and disinterested plan, Protestants, Roman Catholics, Strangers, and Foreigners, have an equal right to be relieved by it ; and no other recommendation is required than a Sufficiency of evident Distress.

To the great honour of these nations, charitable institutions of various kinds have been established ; and on their respective plans, much good has been done : But this good has been local and confined ; as in general, only a certain number of resident individuals have been entitled to the advantages accruing from such Charities. But the STRANGER'S FRIEND SOCIETY is not only constituted on a more extensive scale, but, being totally free from bigoted partiality, and contracted parochial views, it extends its designed beneficence throughout creation, and consequently recommends itself to every pious humane heart.

As the concerns of the Soul are beyond all comparison the most important, the strictest attention will be paid to the Eternal Interests of all those who are, or may be objects of this Institution, by instructing them in the principles of the Religion of Christ, and the duties respectively incumbent on them ; of all which, many who have already come under the notice of this Society, were found to be as ignorant as the beasts of the field.

Should this Institution meet with the encouragement and support it deserves, we shall, in consequence, be able to procure Food, Clothes, Coals, and Medical Assistance for multitudes who are utterly destitute of these things, and hereby, lives profitable to the Public, will, under the blessing of God, be rescued from untimely death.

Every considerate person will easily see, that to bring the above extensive design into execution, liberal Subscriptions will be necessary.—Those who desire to succour the Distressed, are earnestly solicited in its behalf—You wish to befriend the friendless, and minister to the bodies and souls of the wretched, but you know not where to find them. Street Beggars you prudently judge are not proper objects of your Charity.—The Members of the STRANGER'S FRIEND SOCIETY will seek for those you wish to find—They will meet with them in Cellars, Garrets, &c. where you have no access, and will supply your lack of service, by applying your bounty according to your own wish, and in ministering to the necessitous, become their servants and yours for Christ's sake.

All, therefore, who are Friends of God and Man, we consider as Patrons of this Institution. Under the auspices of such may it increase and flourish, that the relief and thanksgiving of many may redound, to their comfort, and the everlasting glory of God !—Amen.

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THE GENERAL RULES ARE THESE.

I. THAT the Members of this Society meet once a week to settle the weekly visitation accompts, to receive benefactions, and to take in notices and recommendations of STRANGERS in DISTRESS.

II. That two stewards and a treasurer be appointed, to take care of the money and keep the accompts; one of the stewards to be changed every six months, and the treasurer annually.

III. That proper books be provided, in which regular entries of all receipts and disbursements shall be made; which books shall stand open for the inspection of the subscribers and the public.

IV. That the members of this society be such as are of an unblameable character, capable of instructing those they visit in the way of righteousness, and praying with and for them.

V. That they diligently and *impartially* seek for those who stand in the greatest need of help, and relieve them according to their necessities, and bring their Report to the next weekly meeting.

N. B Though this society is instituted by the METHODISTS, yet their own poor shall not be intitled to *any* relief from it, a fund for supplying their wants being already established. †

As our Rules grew out of our Exigencies and Experience, the following were soon found to be essentially necessary.

At a General Meeting of the VISITORS of the STRANGER'S FRIEND SOCIETY, the following Rules were read one by one, unanimously approved, and ordered to be printed.

I. WE will adhere scrupulously to our former printed Rules; and particularly to that which states, that "No person shall be employed as a visitor, who is not of an unblameable character, and capable of praying with, and instructing those he visits, in the way of righteousness."

II. Every visitor shall make it a point between God and his conscience, never to leave those he visits, without praying for, and instructing them in the principles of the religion of Christ, according to his ability; and those who neglect to do this, shall be excluded this society.

III. Every visitor shall endeavour to see the person or persons, he is called to, in the course of *that day* in which the application is made. *

IV. Every visitor shall himself *buy*, if possible, the things necessary for the distressed; and not trust the bounty of the society in the hands of the injudicious or ungodly attendants of such persons.

† The above paper was first printed in MANCHESTER, Nov. 1791, and circulated by Messrs. Bradburne and Clarke among the principal Inhabitants of that Town and neighbourhood. To the honour of that most benevolent people, let it be known, that in about three weeks from the publication of the paper, upwards of £300 was subscribed to support this Institution, and the Subscriptions have since, amounted to between 7 and 800 pounds *annually*.

* Because it was often observed that several persons from their peculiar distresses must have perished in a *few hours* had not the Visitors found and relieved them.

V. A

V. A sum of money shall be expended annually in shirts, shifts, blankets, &c. which will be principally given to those who are afflicted. †

VI. Every visitor shall earnestly recommend *cleanliness* to those he visits;—shall oblige them as far as possible, to let fresh air into the place they dwell, to keep the floor *clean swept*, and *dry*,* and exhort them to send their children to the Sunday Schools.

VII. As the money collected for this society, is above all other *sacred*, every visitor shall use the utmost scrupulosity and care in laying it out:—relieving those first, who are in the greatest necessity, and in *such a way*, as the relief may become *most effectual*.

VIII. No person or persons, shall be relieved on any pretence whatever, previously to their being visited.

IX. In order to prevent imposition as far as possible, every visitor shall carefully endeavour to acquaint himself (from the testimony of the neighbouring inhabitants) with every circumstance relative to the character, conduct, and distress of those he visits, that he may know better how to relieve and instruct them: and this he shall make the principal object of his *first* visitation.

X. No visitor shall relieve *his own workmen*, or *their families*, or those who *have wrought* for him, out of the money, &c. of this society: if such be found in distress, and relief cannot be procured for them from the town or parish, in that case, a visitor who has had no intercourse or connexion with them, shall be appointed to communicate that relief, which the judgment of the society may think proper. †

XI. Relief shall be *sparingly* administered, till the names, place of abode, &c. of the person or persons requesting it, be mentioned at a weekly meeting of the society; that it may be known whether such have been relieved by any other of the visitors.

XII. Every visitor shall leave his name with the persons he visits; and inquire, whether they have been relieved before, and by whom: and all visitors shall take care to inform the poor, that the relief which they bring them, is from the STRANGER'S FRIEND SOCIETY.

† This Rule is strictly observed in Manchester, where £159 15 4d was expended in Flannel, Shifts and Shirts, Petticoats, Blankets, and wrapping for Beds, from Nov. 12, 1796, to Nov. 10, 1797. Out of this was given 57 Beds, 93 Pairs of Blankets, 139 Shirts, 401 Shifts, and 173 yards of flannel. By these Articles, and the other Donations of the Society, 1678 families were relieved: and during the distribution of this Relief not less than 4271 visits were paid by the persons employed in this sacred Work.

* When in Manchester, in the year 1792, I recommended *White-washing the walls of INFECTED lodging-houses with Lime slacked in boiling water*. This advice was not *then* attended to, but I am happy to find that *now* there is a prospect of the execution of this necessary work, as the physicians of the Infirmary have come forward, and *publicly* recommended this measure with an earnestness which does honour to their *heads* and their *hearts*. I beg leave to recommend this measure to the attention of the benevolent in general, and to the STRANGER'S FRIEND SOCIETY in particular, being firmly persuaded, that the worst infection that ever brought death into the habitation of man will yield to this. Where fevers have long prevailed, the foul linen should be washed, and the chaff or straw used for lying on burnt. A. C.

† This Rule and the 12th were made to prevent the poor from falling under undue influence, by shewing them that they were not obliged to their Masters or Employers for this Relief, but to the Charity of the Public, through the means of the Society.

XIII. No visitor shall be permitted to give money to be distributed by any person, who is not an enrolled member of this society.

XIV. These Rules shall be printed, and a copy given to every member of this society, and to each of the subscribers.

XV. On the admission of a new visitor, these Rules shall be proposed one by one, by way of question; and no person shall be employed as such, who will not solemnly promise by God's help, to abide by them.

That the *Spirit* and *Design* of this Institution may fully appear, we think proper to add Mr. C---'s Address to the Visitors at *Manchester*, and his Letter to the Inhabitants of *Liverpool*, in behalf of the STRANGER'S FRIEND SOCIETY.

To the VISITORS of the STRANGER'S FRIEND SOCIETY.

My dear Brethren:

FROM the preceding Rules (which comprehend every thing relative to the secular part of your office) and from the nature of the thing itself, you may easily perceive, that the work in which you have generously engaged, is *Important*, *Awful*, and *Honourable*: and, in these respects equals, if not exceeds, every thing an intelligent being can be employed in.

1. It is *Important* — You are called to comfort the feeble-minded, to support the weak, to visit and relieve the Fatherless and the Widows, to remove, or alleviate every species of distress and misery among the people — to prevent untimely deaths, and to rescue immortal spirits from the pit of destruction. These are the prime objects of this Institution; from which it appears, that its *Importance* is such, as cannot be adequately described.

2. It is *Awful*! — You have to deal with *souls* as well as bodies. Souls, not cultivated by science, nor influenced by Religion; but, on the contrary, ignorant of themselves, and their Maker, immersed in iniquity, and regardless of their present and eternal interests. *These*, you oblige yourselves “to instruct in the way of righteousness.” What wisdom! what zeal! what caution are requisite in this great work! — You stand between the living and the dead, to denounce the righteous judgments of the Most High to his fallen creatures, and to explain the plan of Redemption.

You know, that the human heart is prone to deceive itself, and it is the interest of Satan to help forward and confirm the delusion: you have the *deceits* of the one, and the *wiles* of the other to contest with. To be successful, you must strive to gain admission to the most secret recesses of the mind — to the abode of vain *hopes* and *wishes*, in order to examine their respective grounds, and manifest the tendency they have to destroy the souls of those, who while they indulge them, live in the habitual neglect of God, and in the transgression of his sacred Laws. When the *vain expectations* of the wicked are cut off, in their place, you must endeavour to implant that *certain Light*, the infallible Word of God, which points them out the way to himself, thro' the sacrifice of his beloved Son.

You see the sword coming to cut off the ungodly: warn them, therefore, as from the Most High, and shew them their danger, and where salvation

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salvation may be found. But take heed, that this be done with faithfulness and perseverance ; for, if thro' insufficient information, any of those, depending on the directions you have given, should vainly expect to enter into eternal glory, without having been deeply convinced of the destructive nature of sin, and the necessity of a full reconciliation to God, how unutterably woeful must your state be, *if you have healed their hurt slightly, and cried Peace ! Peace ! before God had proclaimed it.*

I do not speak thus, my dear Brethren, to affright you from the awfully glorious work you have undertaken, but to make you still more faithful and cautious in it ; and to intimate the necessity of your walking continually in the Light of the Lord --- that being taught of him, you may be fully enabled *to warn every man, and teach every man in all wisdom, that you may present those you have to do with, perfect in Christ Jesus :* and to accomplish this noble work, God will give you wisdom and power sufficient, if you earnestly seek them.

3. It is *Honourable* --- for in this blessed employment you imitate the Saviour of the world, *who came to seek and to save that which was lost.* Like Him, in your inferior measure, you *go about doing good, relieving all manner of disease and distress among the people.* As his respected instruments, you shall save many from the jaws of an untimely death, and perhaps from everlasting woe ; and by restoring them to their Families, to Society, and to the Church of Christ, you will acquire to yourselves that *honour that comes from God,* and at the end of your work, find, that *those who turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever.* Amen.

Take courage, my Brethren ! God has already crowned your labour of love with uncommon success ; and *He will continue with you.* Go forward then in your difficult, yet glorious employment ! Leave no corner of this *large and very populous town* unexplored --- Hunt *Poverty, Sin, and Disease,* thro' all their *public haunts,* and *private retreats* --- Strive to *lessen,* at least, if you cannot totally remove, the immense load of human ills --- and prove to the distressed, by your sympathetic tenderness, that you do not derive your principles from your *Rules,* howsoever excellent, but from the clemency of that God, whose *Name is Mercy,* and whose *Nature is Love.*

Again I say, "be not discouraged : " *in due season ye shall reap, if ye faint not.* The Providence of God, influencing the public mind, will afford you means sufficient to relieve the bodily wants of those you visit ; and his Grace will enable you to do good to their Souls. *Be instant in season, out of season ; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long suffering* --- Lift up your hearts and voices over them in earnest supplication to that God, whose nature you share : become intercessors for their souls ; and those who withstood the threatenings of the Divine Law, and perhaps disregarded your instructions, will be constrained to yield to the effusions of your love.

Wishing you unlimited success, and heartily praying, that the blessing of the Most High may rest on the Stranger's Friend Society,

I am, my dear Brethren,

Your affectionate Servant in the Lord,

A. CLARKE.

That

TO the INHABITANTS of LIVERPOOL.

THE visitors of the STRANGER'S FRIEND SOCIETY, in behalf of the many distressed families and individuals who have been already relieved, beg leave to return hearty thanks to the ladies, gentlemen, and others, in this town, who have contributed to the support of an Institution formed on the most disinterested principles, and calculated to lessen the evils, and promote the spiritual and temporal welfare of thousands.

From the last *Annual Report*, of which the subscribers are already in possession, it appears that the small sum of 98l. 5s. 6d. has been distributed among *three hundred and twenty-one* families! many of whom were in the utmost distress, and in all human probability must have perished, had it not been for the timely assistance they received from this society. †

Notwithstanding what has been done already, it is painful to have occasion to say, that many hundreds more have been found in similar distresses, to whom (from its contracted circumstances) the aid of this society could not reach; nor could the cash already distributed, have been more extensively spread, as it has been divided to each in as *small* portions as possible, so as to permit the relief to be at all effectual.

From the *rules and regulations* which we have now adopted, we shall still be able to pursue the same economical plan, and even to *improve* it, that whatever is collected, may be dispersed among as many as possible.

That the coming summer pretends nearly as much distress to the poor, as the late winter produced, will require few arguments to prove to those who seriously consider the present stagnation of trade, and the uncommon dearth of provisions. Even now the visitors find many, very many in extreme distress. The demands are so numerous and pressing, it cannot be supposed we can form any *fund*: On the contrary there is a demand for every penny as soon as it is received, and for much more than is contributed. Trusting in HIM who alone is able to influence the public mind to give more largely, we are increasing the number of visitors: Men chosen on the preceding rules, who deeply fear God, and love all the souls he has made---men of humane hearts and sound judgments, who are determined thro' the aid of their Maker, to lay themselves out to the uttermost for his glory and the public good. But what can these do without your assistance? Come forward then, in the name of the Father of compassions! and contribute to the numbers who are ready to perish, whose prayers to God for their benefactors, will draw down innumerable blessings on yourselves and your families.

Men and brethren! let no party prejudices induce any of you to withhold your support from this institution. While your souls melt at the tale of woe, and your hand is ready to minister to the wretched through the medium of the STRANGER'S FRIEND SOCIETY,

† Since this was published, the Subscriptions to this Society have considerably increased.

an evil genius may whisper "These men wish to make proselytes---" "they wish to serve their own party by this institution." NO--- The liberal plan on which this society is formed, amply refutes this uncandid insinuation, and the *Rules* absolutely preclude every member of the Methodist connexion from being relieved in any form whatever from the contributions to this society. In this instance alone, are we contracted---here alone, we are illiberal. *Forgive us this wrong.* "But why do you connect religion with it?" Because we believe, *THERE IS A GOD*, and know, that the Salvation which he has provided, can *alone* afford lasting comfort to the human mind. Therefore, we openly confess, that our grand aim is to get those souls which are astray in the dark paths of ignorance, sin, and death, and who have none that care for them, brought to the acknowledgment of that truth which is according to godliness; and the lives of those who are ready to perish, prolonged, that they may become useful members of civil society, and fellow-heirs with you of the grace and power of an endless life. But we aim not at making proselytes to any *creed* that distinguishes any sect of religious people. As instruments in *your* hands, we wish to save *life* --- as instruments in the hands of *GOD*, we wish to save *souls*. This is our aim, and the utmost bounds of our ambition. Sectarian prejudices of every kind we sacrifice (in this work) at the shrine of universal philanthropy, and endeavour through his grace, to imitate him who went about doing good, and relieving all manner of distresses among the people. *

Give us then, we intreat you, in the name of *GOD* and *Man*! pecuniary assistance, and help us by your influence, and by your prayers; and then watch our conduct; follow us to the abodes of sin and misery, and examine whether your bounty be not expended according to your utmost wishes. Or, if you cannot go with us to these habitations of death, inspect our books, where regular entries shall be made of the cases and places of abode of the distressed, and the quantum of relief communicated to each.

As several persons may find it more convenient to give a *little* often, than to give *much* at *once*, we therefore solicit such to subscribe *weekly*. However small the sum may be, it will be gratefully received, and by these weekly receipts, we shall have an increase of power to relieve those distressed persons whom we daily find.

The most rigid impartiality we trust shall mark all our steps, and no other recommendation shall ever be deemed necessary by this Society, but a *sufficiency of evident distress*, and without which no person can be relieved howsoever recommended, for a *subscriber* may be imposed upon, but a *visitor* scarcely can, who is obliged by his rules to

* Has no Society formed on this plan *degenerated*? Is it true that any *Annual Reports* have been published, the Editors of which have been ashamed or afraid to avow the above Sentiments? Have any *Annual Reports* been published where there is not a word of *GOD* or the Christian Religion mentioned, any more than if they had been written by *Voltaire* or *Rousseau*? Let the Managers of these Charities know, that a vast Majority of the Subscribers rejoice to hear that their bounty has been so applied, as to become instrumental in the hands of *GOD*, not only in relieving Bodies, but also in bringing ignorant and depraved Souls to a thorough religious sense of their duty to *GOD* and *Man*.

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visit the person applying for relief, *previously* to such relief being granted. Therefore, *letters of recommendation* are not required; any person may give notice of those whom he knows or suspects to be fit objects of the attention of this Society. *Partiality* and *Favour* can have no place here, but the voice of unaided misery shall be ever attended to. †

Friends of God and Man! here is a noble work in which you may do good to the uttermost of your power, and fulfil one of the first duties of the religion of Christ, by visiting through these your substitutes, *the fatherless and widows in their affliction*, without subjecting yourselves to the pain and danger of such an employment. God invites; every precept of the Christian religion counsels; and the pressing necessities of multitudes of your brethren, the children of the same Universal Parent, call upon you with a loud and piteous voice to honour human nature in your own persons, by acting agreeably to those maxims of universal benevolence, which you all profess to hold sacred.

May God enlarge your hearts in this good work, and reward you with unnumbered spiritual and temporal blessings!

Your's, with much respect,

(In behalf of the Stranger's Friend Society)

A. CLARKE.

LIVERPOOL, May 6th, 1795.

P. S. There are several Societies in London formed on plans nearly similar, and one at the Methodist Chapel WAPPING, on exactly the same plan.

† But *Partiality* and *Favouritism* must prevail, where Subscribers are allowed to recommend objects according to their Subscriptions, for the person recommended by a Subscriber *must be attended to*, whether he be a proper object or not, if otherwise, the Subscriber is offended, thus the end of the Institution is defeated, and the Visitors brought into bondage.

F I N I S.

